



Joint News Release

Joint Public Relations Team

1:00 p.m., December 18, 2009

Primary Contact: Jim Westhoff cell (302) 345-5877 - for updates on road conditions throughout the weekend, call Jim at this number.

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Delaware agencies preparing for weekend storm

Agencies are assembling teams, preparing roads and watching the forecasts.

As a winter storm approaches Delaware, many state agencies are making sure they are prepared for potentially dangerous situations.

For most of today, crews from the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) are pre-treating the primary roads by applying a salt and water mixture so ice does not have a chance to form. "Crews will be pre-treating until about late afternoon, and then they will hopefully get some rest before resuming operations in the early Saturday morning hours," said Joe Wright, DelDOT Director of Maintenance and Operations. "We want our people to get some rest because it looks like it will be a long weekend for our drivers, mechanics, dispatchers, and supervisory staff,".

Wright reminded people to use the internet to view the pictures from the many real-time traffic cameras that are mounted throughout the state. "Before heading out, people should look at the cameras to see road conditions," Wright said. Links to the cameras can be found at www.deldot.gov.

The Delaware State Police (DSP) would like people to make plans now so that people will not be on the roads unless absolutely necessary. "We are asking motorists to use caution when driving and if possible to avoid travel altogether during the storm," said Sgt. Walter Newton, DSP Public Information Officer.

As the state faces what could be the first significant winter storm of the season, Delaware Emergency Management Agency officials urge the public to prepare for the probability that travel will be very restricted on Saturday, Dec. 19 and possibly through the weekend. With the National Weather Service predicting snow

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accumulation of eight to 12 inches throughout the state, people should be prepared to stay close to home and avoid driving.

Since snow is predicted to start around midnight tonight, the public is encouraged to use today to check supplies of food, water and battery- or crank-powered light sources and radios now while there is time to replenish supplies. Snow is predicted to continue through the day Saturday with heaviest precipitation in the early morning, intensifying around 7 – 8 a.m.

There will be high winds associated with the storm so blowing and drifting snow could impede travel on roads even after they have been plowed and treated. The winds will also contribute to wind chill factor issues and exposure to bare skin is to be avoided. Staying indoors with good supplies of food and light sources is the best approach to this weather event. You are reminded to make sure you have necessary medications and food and drink for special dietary needs. Pet needs also should be considered.

Pet owners should also take precautions in allowing pets out in snowy, cold weather. They can become disoriented and lost, and snow and ice removal treatment on roadways and driveways may harm paws and cause illness if ingested.

Many state agencies, including DelDOT, Delaware State Police, DEMA and the Office of Highway Safety are preparing for response to the predicted weather. The public can play a significant role in preparedness and response by staying off the roads, checking on near-by neighbors and staying informed on weather and road conditions. For National Weather Service Quick Forecast information, go to <http://forecast.weather.gov/afm/graphical.php?site=phi>.

Given the unpredictable and changing weather conditions likely to occur, The Delaware Office of Highway Safety (OHS) spokesperson Andrea Summers encourages drivers not to go out on the roadways if they don't have to. "There is no good reason good enough to put yourself at risk for sliding off the slippery roadways, or becoming involved in a crash if you don't have to," Summers said.

"This also puts our emergency responders at risk as they then have to venture out into unsafe conditions to rescue you. So please try to avoid driving in this weather event if you can."

OHS offers the following tips for driving safely in these weather conditions:

- Drive slowly. It's harder to control your vehicle on a slick or snow covered surface and you'll need additional stopping time and distance.
- Leave plenty of distance between you and other vehicles. It gives you a chance to react to collisions that may occur around you.
- Turn on your headlights. It's the law and it makes you more visible to other people.
- Be additionally cautious on bridges and overpasses as they freeze before other roadway surfaces. Brake carefully on exit/entrance ramps.
- If your vehicle starts to skid, don't panic and don't hit the brakes hard. Instead stay calm and ease your foot off the gas while carefully steering in the direction you want the front of your vehicle to go. This procedure, known as "steering into the skid," will bring the back end of your car in line with the front.
- Wear your seatbelt. If you are involved in a wreck your seatbelt will help you keep control of the vehicle and improve your chances of escaping serious injury or death by nearly 50%.

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